

\$4 Million for Indian Housing

HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT WILL BUILD 99 MORE HOUSES FOR INYO'S INDIAN RESERVATIONS, BUT UNION LEADERS WARN THEY WILL DEMAND UNION WAGES FOR THE WORKERS WHO CONSTRUCT THEM

A SCATTERGUN VOLLEY OF LETTERS FROM UNION OFFICIALS warns the builders and directors of a new \$4 million Indian Housing project that they can probably expect big trouble if the project workers are not paid union scale wages. The warnings came hot on the heels of the announcement that the Owens Valley Housing Authority will build 99 new houses on reservations at Bishop (50 houses), Big Pine (33) and Lone Pine (16). The housing project moves off the planning table and onto the ground sometime this week on a contract let to Mammoth-based Harshbarger Construction Corporation. Contract Manager Bryan Therolf verified at mid-week that the company had received letters from law firms representing union organizations. Therolf said that Harshbarger will pay its workers (35% percent of whom must be Indians, under a contract agreement) on the basis of wages set by the Department of Labor. He said that department has "determined the wage scale to be the prevailing wage of the area."

Not if the unions have their say. And if past actions are any guideline, the figure may not hold up. From his office at Big Pine, OVIHA Spokesman Bob Vance said the Department of Labor had set its proposed wages "below union figures." Past records indicate the union may win: It was only last week that OVIHA received about \$22,000 to be paid out to workers and sub-contractors who, according to the U.S. Inspector General, were underpaid in earlier projects here; a clear-cut union victory.

As for the unions' reactions to the project wage scale, Vance said he expects "harrassment from them." He argued, however, that it's a matter of choosing between "hassling over wages, or getting houses built." The project then will get moving right away.

At the head of the union battle line is a
(See HOUSING, Page 6)

"Aquacopious"

FOR CATTLEMEN - AND ALMANAC PUBLISHERS - RAIN-SODDEN 1978 MAY BE A BANNER YEAR; AND THERE MAY BE MORE MOISTURE VERY SOON

SAYS BISHOP RANCHER DON TATUM OF THE COUNTY'S aquacopious weather, "What makes it good, is the combination of moisture and warm temperatures." And so it was; the national weather service has noted what it weightily calls "a dramatic change" in the weather patterns of recent years, a characterization with which most of California's well-drenched inhabitants will readily agree.

For drought-weary Inyo and Mono Counties, the change occurred gently. Snow fell on Mammoth's barren ski slopes on November fifth to mark the arrival of the first of 10 Pacific storms that have since brought moisture with a welcome regularity.

For cattlemen like Tatum, who says "It's great!", the end of drought will probably mean a restoration of the valley's herds to a normal level; most of them have cut back the number of their animals by as much as 25%. Although it was pure speculation (in view of the vagaries of DWP policy), Tatum also forecast that the Department of Water and Power will release

(See WEATHER, Page 4)

The INYO COUNTY NEWS-LETTER

A NEWS ALTERNATIVE - EASTERN SIERRA NEWS SERVICE

Compiled by John Heston and Benett Kessler

LIMITED CIRCULATION
Published weekly

SUPPORT AND USE
YOUR LIBRARY.

Week of
Jan. 23, 1978

GLIDDEN RESIGNS

A KEY PUBLIC WORKS OFFICIAL QUILTS
TO SEEK ELECTION AS A SUPERVISOR

SURVEYOR, COUNTY ENGINEER, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR of public works, all these and more, have been the positions official and unofficial filled by Roger Dale Glidden who announced late last week his intentions to seek still another: that of county supervisor.

Glidden's announcement to resign his job came to light Thursday afternoon as courthouse personnel prepared the agenda for this week's supervisors' meeting, but Glidden had privately put county newsmen on notice earlier in the week. His seemingly sudden decision to resign was in fact the culmination of several months of "serious thought." Said Glidden: "I've been thinking about it since last May."

In his "official" announcement, he said



RESIGNING ROGER GLIDDEN

"..from drawing board to the last nail.."

he will leave the county position on March 31 and will "be an active candidate in the upcoming election for supervisor of the third supervisorial district," a seat now held by Bishop's Wilma Muth. He told questioning reporters that he feels that "as a supervisor I can do more for the county than I can in my present job." He has served as public works' assistant director (under Director Bob Fisher) for seven years.

In the job the resigning official has in fact functioned in several of the county's cap-

(See RESIGNATION, Page 4)

TRUE, I WAS A LITTLE ROUGH last week on the good-ole-boys in the Ku Klux Klan who advertise here in the county for recruits. And I'd like to set the record right about my views on Any Ethnic Group - such as KKK. Who knows - some of our best friends may be Klansmen, and last week, when I likened Klansmen to "superdopes" and "cretins" I should have kept that to only a small percentage - its leadership and just a few others. Understand, now, I Have Nothing Against Klansmen. So long as they Keep Their Place. I just don't want any of them moving into my neighborhood, and wouldn't want any kids of mine going to school with them (They have a high crime rate, you know), or want them trying to marry my sister. But when they act right, they should be treated with kindness; (I often give them a small tip whenever I can, a dime or so, and it makes them happy and they roll their eyes and give a big bright smile in that charming way of theirs.) It's unfortunate, but you know how it is; the Klan moves in, there goes the neighborhood, and property values go down. But, mind you, they have their good points: They make good workers, shoeshine boys, field hands, janitors - even household servants when they're not uppity or lazy. And I think it's sweet of the media to let them take out little ads; it proves that they can read and write a little, and learn simple things, and I'm all for giving the KKK all the educational advantages they can handle. Equal - but separate, of course. Now I just can't agree with all these Bleeding-Heart Liberals who want to give the Klansmen Everything, just like us. Someday, after they prove themselves, the Klan should even be given the vote. But My Daddy says that may take two or three generations, and I agree. We can just take all this liberalism so far, you know! Meanwhile, I think we should just kind of keep them in their place, give them a little encouragement and make the KKK leaders go to school regularly. And we can learn a great deal from their culture, too; look at the quaint shuffle dances they can do (They have a Natural Sense of Rhythm), and the Native Clothing they design (if you care for white, of course). Never give one any liquor.



BENETT KESSLER

THERE ON THE SCREEN FOR ALL TO SEE, God incarnate in the person of George Burns. Hollywood has turned out a warm and moving film, "Oh, God!" and somehow they managed to pull it off without sacrilege. Burns is at his hilarious best. And look where the producer chose to set up God in his earthly headquarters: on the top floor of a Los Angeles office building, surrounded by a moat. Says one Bishop wag: "No wonder the DWP is confident; they've got God on the top floor." And so it is. A call to LA's DWP headquarters reveals that much of the "Oh, God!" footage was shot on locations in the DWP building. Suspicions confirmed; even Hollywood seems convinced that DWP is omnipotent.

VERY PLEASANT PEOPLE DEPT: The "Gardner's Has It" guy, Gwen Gardner, busy and productive hardware merchant. One of those people who

Tries To Do Everything, but never too busy to provide just what is needed in every Inyo store: a big hello and a real smile for all who enter. Gardner's, indeed, "has it."

ANOTHER VPP: Inyo's Health Officer, Dr. Victor Hough, also busy. He is the county physician, medical director of two sanatoriums, and mental health program director in drug abuse and alcohol programs. He's also active on a number of boards and special committees. He has served Inyo County for 25 years.

FORMER MUSEUM DIRECTOR HENRY RAUB is getting together data on the "Inyo Meteorite," this for Congressman Bill Ketchum who recently was asked if he might help to get the 300-pound meteorite from the Smithsonian and return it to Inyo. "I'll need some information and I'd like to see some public support," said the congressman in answer to the request. "You know, I can't just walk into the Smithsonian and say, hey, give me my meteorite."

LOOK FOR THE RESIGNATION OF A TOP COUNTY OFFICIAL, effective March 1. If the story gets off the ground before deadline, it may be reported elsewhere in these pages. Where will the county get the talent to fill a lot of these vacancies? Down south, probably. The board is afraid to hire local talent for anything; too controversial. And who around here isn't controversial if he or she is doing anything at all? One supervisor admitted he declined to vote for the appointment of one job applicant "because he got a couple of adverse phone calls about him" (the applicant.) Another's proudest boast (to any who will listen) is "I'm my own man." I can believe that; he votes according to personal prejudices. When the supervisors feel fearful of making a simple decision, they name a committee. And then - would you believe! - often refuse to act on the committee's advice! Inyo's ship of state is far from sinking, but troubles in many departments indicate it may need direction.

REMEMBER THE GREAT AMERICAN FLAG-WAVER, H.L. Hunt? He amassed an oil fortune, acquired a big food line, built a mansion (a perfect replica of George Washington's home, Mt. Vernon) on the shores of Dallas' beautiful White Rock Lake, and from it directed a nationwide series of broadcasts to promote all the Great American Virtues. Last week, settling his estate, the lawyers offered to settle out of court \$5 million on the woman who claimed that he was bigamously married (to her). And I won't be buying HIS catsup anymore.

LOOKING FORWARD TO SPRING. Thanks to the rain, the desert will come alive this year; flowers from Bishop to Ridgecrest.

I'VE GOT TO RUN NOW; I think I smell something burning on my front lawn...And may the news in your day be good news...every day.

Sincerely,

BK

WATER MEETINGS CRITICAL

POLITICS AND WRANGLING OVER TRIVIA
STAND IN THE WAY OF A WATER STUDY

UNLESS THERE IS POSITIVE ACTION IN THE "NEXT two" joint meetings called by the attorney general to resolve Inyo-DWP differences, those meetings may yet prove to be no more than what many already suspect they are: token gestures. Last week as still another in the series of meetings was held sources at Sacramento and Independence speculated that Attorney General Evelle Younger may have called the meetings to salve the wounds of the Department of Water and Power, bed-fellow of the state Department of Water Resources. With his eye on the gubernatorial election ahead, and with pressure on him to "get the water issue out of the courts," Younger may have felt some kind of gesture was required.

From Sacramento last week a reliable and informed news source disclosed the basic thrust of the meetings, this in spite of a news blackout demanded early-on by one of the participants, the Department of Water and Power. He said last week's meeting was "something very important," and that the officials may be reaching an agreement. But it was also disclosed that "the next two meetings" will probably determine the success of the entire series.

And what, exactly, are the principals to "agree" on?

It came to light that the chief issue at the meetings is the matter of a proposed water study. It would be a three-way study to determine with finality just how much water exists above and below the surface of Owens Valley. A proposed study would include equal participation and cost-sharing on the part of the three interested entities: DWP, Inyo County, and the Department of Water Resources.

Although all three are reported to be in agreement "in principle," the details and delegation of authority have caused delays, at least up to now. One county official said weeks ago that the participants "haggled over one word" for hours.

As the general idea of the purpose of the meetings came to light, it became immediately clear that Inyo County is probably in no financial position to put up its share of the ante demanded in an "equal" sharing of costs. With some justification it had been argued that DWP (who gets and who will get the lion's share of water) should foot the bill. But it was also seen that if the attorney general pushed that idea he might also fall quickly into DWP's disfavor and create an opposition he may not want in his grab for the Republican gubernatorial nomination.

Even if the plan is adopted, which until last week's meeting appeared unlikely, Inyo will be hard put to share the cost. County officials at one time hoped for a grant that might pay Inyo's way, but the first application made a year ago was turned down. And at present, the planning department (which applies for the grant money) is lagging months behind in several programs. Less than a week remains before the deadline for a second application, and the department is unable to act since it lacks necessary data on water and housing needs. These must be

proven to the satisfaction of the state planning and research department that holds the pursestrings. Although he declined comment on content of the meetings, County Administrator John K. Smith, when apprised of the fact that the meetings were no longer secret, verified the financial situation. For such a study, he said, "The county can't afford very much. We just don't have the money...We can provide some manpower and a few dollars."

(For further observations on the proposed water study, see an editorial which appears on this week's FORUM page.)

BISHOP FIRES ITS CITY CLERK

AMID RUMORS AND CHARGES, THE CITY
FATHERS KEEP A TROUBLED SILENCE

BISHOP'S MUNICIPAL HOT-SPOT, THE CITY CLERK office, smouldered vacantly last week in the wake of the sudden unexplained firing of its top officer, Billie Lou Parks. Asked to give their reason for the firing, members of the city council kept the lid on and declined to confirm or deny rumored complaints of Ms. Parks' drinking or mismanagement. The firing came in an unexpected announcement after a Thursday executive session of the council. City Administrator Fred Coburn was asked how long the dismissal had been in the making and he replied "I can't say...No." About the rumored (and unverified) "drinking" problem Coburn gave a terse "no comment." He did say that he knows of no "inefficiencies" in Parks' office. Asked if some of the city officials themselves had discussed the reported drinking "around town," Coburn said again "No comment."

As the new week got underway, the administrator and city councilmen began a search for a replacement; a meeting had been set for Monday. It has been the second controversial firing in that department in as many years, and until a replacement is made Coburn himself will take over management of the office; in that, in effect, Coburn now wears "three hats": that of administrator, chief of police, and now, that of clerk.

Former Mayor and now City Councilman P.D. Cook was pressed for answers about the sudden dismissal. "I'm not going to say anything about it. It's our policy when a department head departs not to say anything about it." Clearly irritated by a reporter's questions about the council's motivations, Cook said he "has no comment about any question. There is no story in it. Her performance was unsatisfactory."

But Parks herself was less reticent. In a telephone conversation with her, the following exchange occurred (here reproduced in part).

Q: Do you think the firing was fair?

A: No, I don't think it was fair.

Q: Why did it happen?

A: I have no idea.

Q: There has been some talk that it is because you have a drinking problem. Is there any truth to that?

A: I don't think anyone could say that I was incompetent.

(See FIRING, Page 5)

WEATHER, Continued

its excess water for flood irrigation, this along with its "normal" irrigation that goes to pasturelands.

Inyo's weather, a combination of water and warm air, is the spin-off of Pacific jet-stream action which for 1977-78 at least has chosen to direct itself directly west-east. In the drought years, these took a northerly direction from the Pacific, which culminated in drought for California, warm temperatures for Alaska - and record snow and ice for the Midwest. More evenly divided this year, the high currents seem to be distributing more equally the winter's wet largesse.

The well-remembered "Winter of '69" was moisture-laden in frigid excess; with the water came also a freezing, numbing cold, and the land was smothered until March with 18 inches of white substance that was more ice than snow and which, when it melted, caused flooding instead of deep irrigating.

How about the future? Will the storms continue, or will Saturday's sun burn its way into Spring? Answers Bishop Meteorologist Jim Savage: "To be honest about it, there are no good long-range forecasts. Oh, there are big computers that try, but there's no sure way to tell." That, it would seem, is the "official" view.

Quite un-"officially," however, it came to light late last week that other weather people are making some off-the-record, tongue-in-cheek predictions of their own. Somewhere in the past few years it was discovered that a very old source had been making forecasts with an accuracy and constancy that was un-nerving to the more sophisticated scientists: It was the 186-year-old publication, "The Old Farmer's Almanac." And therein lies a wholenother story.

PREDICTING THE WEATHER:
"ALMANAC" CALLS ITS SHOTS

A few meteorologists were quietly passing among themselves The News: The Almanac, which is taken seriously by only a minority of its Faithful, had for several years shown an almost embarrassing accuracy. "Almanac" was predicting weather, fair and foul, and calling its shots to the day. The drought, unexpected and unpredicted by the weather scientists, was forecast with an almost casual offhandedness by the Almanac's makers, who, operating from their New Hampshire headquarters, claim to have a proprietary right to some private weather formula. And as recent years have shown, it seems to work. In its most recent issue, "Almanac" says in its California weather summary:

"Winter temperatures are expected to be warmer than average with plenty of rain and mountain snows in November, January, March and April. So it would appear that this year will mark the end of drought conditions."

Indeed.

But "Almanac" went further, pinpointing its rain and snowstorms on November 5 and 22; the major December storm on the 17th, etc.

"Almanac's" editor, Robert B. Thomas, predicts not only weather but other natural phenomena with his "formula." Whether "science" could ever prove his technique is another question, but Thomas and others could hardly care

less. They're not telling anyway.

Meanwhile, at week's end, the meteorologists were not calling their shots very well. At New York, the forecaster embarrassedly admitted before television cameras that he had underestimated what he thought to be a minor wet spell. The result of last week's storms; New York, snow that fell at the rate of an inch per hour; Philadelphia, 13-30 inches of snow; Boston, 18-24; West Virginia, 30. Havoc from Nashville to the Atlantic, and from New England to the Carolinas.

For Mammoth and June Lake, last week's new snows were rapidly becoming too much of a good thing. A few residents were furious; the snowplows appeared to be working more for the tourists of the ski-lift trade than for them. And it appeared that Mono County's road crews were understaffed and perhaps underequipped to handle the job. At Mammoth's Tamarack Lodge, more than two dozen people were stranded, snowed-in like a Jack London blizzard victim, for three days. When they heard the snowplow's engine die, giving up the attempt only a few hundred yards away, they skied out. Do the skiers like what's happening? Emphatically, yes; all of Mammoth's hotels, motels and lodges, and all of its condominiums, are reserved to 100% capacity for the next three weekends.

Any "forecast" for California must cover other than meteorological considerations: In
(See WEATHER, Page 5)

RESIGNATION, Continued

activities that are not too clearly defined: as he said, "I really act as the county engineer," and in the position (a critical one here) he also directed much of the activity of county projects from drawing board to the last nail driven. He is also known as one of the county's more astute "grant getters" and even as he talked to reporters he was concluding detail-work for two grants for the upgrading of airstrips at Independence and Lone Pine.

In his bid to unseat Incumbent Muth, Glidden may face other contenders, but if he follows his announced intent to act immediately to get on the ballot he will be the first to make an official filing. Another seeking the position is Bishop's anti-DWP Activist Moe Jacobson.

The new contender, whose youthful appearance and natty attire belie his 41 years, has been "in county government" for 21 years. Out of that experience Glidden has acquired what he calls "a working knowledge of government." In Inyo County, at least, he has also acquired something else; courthouse observers note his capacity to win the loyalty of subordinate workers, a fact which often shows itself in terms of rapidly-completed projects.

Upon resigning Glidden will enter into private business and, politics aside, is expected to develop and expand a Bishop-based Engineering firm. He lives at Bishop with his wife and two children.

He declined public comment on his strategy to defeat the popular Bishop supervisor, wife of a prominent optician. Always the diplomat, Glidden said he is "a friend" of Muth and planned to call her personally to tell her of his decision.

FIRING, Continued

Q: In a statement on Thursday you had mentioned 'outside influences'...What did you mean by that?

A: I can't say, but there will be more forthcoming.

Q: What about the wording of the government code, that says the city clerk works at the pleasure of the city council. The council men have interpreted that to mean they need give no reason for firing?

A: A judge should answer that question.

Q: Will you take legal action in this matter?

A: I don't wish to answer that. There's a hell of a lot I'd like to say, but I was advised not to talk.

Q: Who advised you of that?

A: I am not at liberty to say who. When there is more, it won't be me commenting.

Q: Were there any inefficiencies in your office? - Any complaints?

A: No. I inherited a lot of problems. The city had been without a clerk for many months. From what I can ascertain, I was doing an outstanding job. I was pleased with my staff, and it helped when an extra clerical person was hired to release me for more managerial work. I've been working on the election; I was on top of it though and most of it is done. The job of city clerk takes an amount of expertise. Most people in city hall don't know what the clerk does. It was amazing to me that the city council doesn't know. They think the clerk does the agenda and the minutes. It's a multi-faceted position.

Q: What had you done before coming to Bishop?

A: I was a deputy city clerk, then I was elected city clerk of Banning, California. I came here well qualified.

Q: How did you find out you were fired?

A: Wednesday at five o'clock the city administrator called me into his office and said I was going to be terminated.

Q: Did he say why?

A: He said some things but I'm not at li-

WEATHER, Continued

California, water is money and weather is politics. At mid-week, DWP officials wondered where to dump all their running, sloshing, muddy excess, and by week's end the Los Angeles City Council moved to withdraw many of its drought-created water use restrictions.

In Owens Valley, actions and outlooks were taken more cautiously. Asked if the watering-down that ended the drought would also end DWP's groundwater pumping, DWP's Walter Hoyer said, "We'll have to evaluate at that time" (when the court order runs out in April).

Is the drought, then, really over? Those who may be qualified to answer maintain a position of wait-and-see. They are all-too-aware that the valley's sun and unfettered desert winds can undo quickly the good works of January's cloudy whims. If statistics really prove anything, the figures overall indicate about 90% "of normal." But then, too, many are betting on the "Old Farmer's Almanac" and its quaintly mystical, down-home prognostications: More storms to come.

berty to say what.

Q: So you were told before the special meeting on Thursday - after which your firing was announced?

A: Yes. There must have been some meetings among the city council prior to the Thursday meeting.

Q: Did you have conflicts with the council?

A: I was delighted to work with Fred Curn. And the council sent me messages that I was doing a good job, via people of the town. It was a complete surprise to me, a bombshell. I'm a great believer in teamwork. A government should be a team, not individuals building their own little empires. I felt we had an outstanding team. I felt things were really "shaping up." It will all be coming forth within a couple of weeks.

Q: What will you do now?

A: I'll be moving to Southern California where my family lives...sometime this week.

Q: Who is your attorney?

A: I can't tell you. But I can say he is not local.

With that, Parks ended the talk. She had made another brief statement: "I have enjoyed serving the people of Bishop. The action taken by the council, based on outside influence, may not be conclusive."

If as Parks says, the facts are inconclusive, the firing itself was seen by many observers as the smoke from some underlying fire in the Bishop city clerk's office. For three years it would appear that many of the city's basic conflicts and controversies have risen there and all efforts of the city administration have so far served more to cure symptoms than to eliminate causes.

KIOQ'S XØ&\$%*#£-! BLOOPER

TUNED IN TO A BASKETBALL BROADCAST LAST WEEK, KIOQ-FM listeners were suddenly assaulted by a blast of four-letter exclamations that rudely interrupted Announcer Bob Wellman's live commentary on a game at Boron.

The intruding voice went angrily out to countless radio sets and into the offended ears of all who were listening. "Hello, hello...Who's on here?!...What the hell is going on?" was just for starters and composed the mildest part of the intruder's complaint. The voice went out over the airwaves unheard by announcer Wellman who continued his commentary unaware of the accompanying vulgarisms. But Station Owner Roy Mayhugh was listening. A station spokesman told what happened:

Mayhugh immediately called Continental Telephone Company. Experience told him that the phone line to air the broadcast had been plugged like a party line into some private line. Meanwhile, The Voice came on again but thankfully hung up in disgust.

And where were the telephone repairmen to correct the error? At the basketball game, of course - as the phone company later explained to Mayhugh. Mayhugh, like all radio people everywhere, holds in his memory hundreds of such "bloopers," those alarming and often embarrassing incongruities that stand out all the more as radio tries to "polish" its split-second programming.

HOUSING, Continued

familiar Inyo figure. He is Norman Morin, a former Big Pine resident who serves as the fire-brand business agent for the International Laborer's Union (AFL-CIO). Morin, speaking from his office at Sacramento, has shown himself to be a sharp and effective in-fighter capable of causing troublesome and costly delays on projects that are publicly financed but fail to include union labor paid at union scale. For the workers on the Indian Housing project Morin wants pay of up to \$13 an hour for ordinary "common labor," and considerably more for skilled workers at various levels. Morin's figure stands in sharp contrast to the \$5-an-hour amount set by the Department of Labor for this project. Even OVIHA officials think \$5 is too little. OVIHA had asked for a minimum \$7, but the figure was rejected by D of L. When Harshbarger's workers go on the job this week some will earn the lower figure.

Just what labor's - and Morin's - reaction will be when the contractor moves his men on the site at \$5, is anybody's guess. If his reaction is anything like those in the past, the feisty labor boss may cause an immediate confrontation. Not infrequently he has himself taken up a picket sign to stalk angrily into a construction site demanding that every worker there show a union card - all this while batteries of union lawyers throw up legal entanglements that sometimes take months to settle.

Whatever battle ensues, the final winners will be the valley's indians. Some of these are scattered off the reservations, thanks to a dismal lack of housing, and many will return to Indian land. The new houses are to be completed in a year, or, roughly, at the rate of almost two a week. Vance said the Indian population has seen a gradual increase and that housing has rarely stayed abreast of need - at least not on the reservations, and certainly not in terms of the quality housing that easy money from the Department of Housing and Urban Development can buy. Once they move in, the Indian occupants will be paying "a percentage of their incomes" for the houses, some as little as \$25 a month, others up to \$80 or \$90, for the next 25 years.

And that's not all. In store for the near future for Inyo's favored tribes is still a third housing plan: Vance only recently entered the application for another 120 HUD houses to follow closely the present project.

To acquaint everyone with the NEWS-LETTER, "Complimentary" copies are sent each week to many people. If you are one of these and wish to receive NEWS-LETTER regularly, make sure you send your subscription order today.

PLEASE SEND
INYO COUNTY NEWS-LETTER
FOR THE NUMBER OF WEEKS CHECKED BELOW.

☐ 50 Weeks \$32 ☐ 25 Weeks \$17 ☐ 3 Months \$9

SEND TO _____
ADDRESS _____
CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____



TYPICAL HUD HOUSE NEAR BIG PINE
"..final winners...the valley's Indians."

SCHOOL BOARD POWER BID

WHILE SEARCHING FOR AUTHORITY DEFINITIONS, THE COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD INVITES CANDIDATES TO OPPOSE THE PRESENT SCHOOL SUPERINTENDANT

FOR 20 YEARS ENTRENCHED AS THE SUPERINTENDENT of Inyo's County Schools operations, Mel Bernasconi is up for election again in 1978. This time, he says he's not sure he wants it. And a troublesome school board is making noises, privately and off the record, that imply that its members are not all that much behind him either.

The controversy is like a loud conversation heard in another room; nothing but unclear sounds emerge, muffled, but carrying with them a certain tone. Bernasconi's opponents on the school board are nervously eager to cover their feelings, and they make no clear-cut statements that would put their opposition on the record.

But last week the board approved unanimously a resolution that said in part that the board "desires to encourage qualified individuals to declare their candidacy for the office of Inyo County Superintendent of Schools." The resolution was careful to carry in it a list of just what those qualifications are.

The board's action, however diplomatically expressed, was a clear signal, and one probably not lost on Bernasconi, a canny, persistent power figure well-equipped and experienced in the art of small-county political in-fighting. Asked to comment, Bernasconi said mildly: "I haven't read it yet. Usually I see things before the meetings, but I hadn't seen that." If the superintendent's words are to be believed then it appears that board members are no longer apprising him of the items they plan to spring at the board meetings.

One board member from Independence, Barbara Choquette, was asked why the board would venture so far as to pass a resolution looking for candidates. "It's only fair," she replied, "that we make this information available to any of those interested. We've done what is necessary. It should be an open thing. It (the superintendent's office) is not someone's private bailiwick. I would like to see more people know about the office; it's a public office and the taxpayers' dollars are involved."

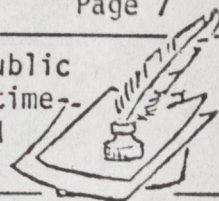
But with the election in the offing, Choquette said she "really doesn't want to discuss" any problems between Bernasconi and the board.

The "problems" could hardly be characterized as explosive. They are more like the rumblings that precede some future eruption. At the heart of the matter rests a vexing lack of

(See SCHOOL BOARD, Back page)

NEWS-LETTER welcomes letters and comment relevant to public issues, and the editors will publish those considered time-

ly. Letters should not exceed 200 words and those with viewpoints concisely stated are most likely to be published. Address your statement to Box 531, Independence.



AN EDITORIAL (See story: "Water Meetings Critical," on Page 3)

Any real peace is unlikely until all concerned find - and accept - the real facts

Fixed in the minds of many Inyo and Mono officials is the confident certainty, not unjustified, that an accurate knowledge of Owens Valley water resources will prove to be of great value.

Once the information is indisputably in hand, the counties then might legally establish their real needs, the proof to be found in other statistical evaluations of economic and population factors. Heretofore, each warring participant has in fact based his claim on water estimates quite unproven. Hence, the court's demand for another DWP environmental impact report, and Inyo's eleventh-hour appointment of a hydrologist.

Just how much water are we all arguing about? How much flows beneath Owens Valley, and how long will it last if it is pumped at what rate? Can it be replaced? Probably, the answers are beyond the imaginings of any "experts" that have turned up so far. And the credibility of those with views on it is rightly rejected.

A thorough study must be made. Each interested party must share equally in its control. Each must agree at the outset to live by its findings. With or without county financing (Inyo could ill-afford it), the facts must come to light - perhaps with financing from the state Department of Water Resources which, by definition should have the information anyway.

Then of course, as one county official succinctly observes, "It would depend on whether there are any guts on the state and federal levels" to act on the findings and rigidly enforce them.

Underlying it all is a broad feeling in Inyo County, so poorly defined, that not many people care too much how much water Los Angeles uses, so long as there is enough left for the proper uses for this area - and so long as Los Angeles and the DWP relax their grasp on the economics and the politics of Inyo County.

It is also abundantly clear that if any water study is to be ultimately accepted it must allow for equal participation and authority on the parts of each entity involved: DWP, Inyo County and the Department of Water Resources. Would any of these in fact be expected to believe or accept the estimates presented by any single one of the others? In the light of current mutual distrust and past chicanery, to expect such acceptance would be to strain reason.

Practically considered, the participants are all too aware that any unilateral study would be hotly contested in the courts. And the court experience so far has only served to show that nobody really wins. As for Inyo, it is a busy and vital community with no taste for spending its time in the lawyer's office.

The mutual realization of a need for honest evaluation, for equal authority, is apparent. That dawning realization on the part of all may be the final fact that brings all together, however reluctant each may be now to make concessions. We must all hope that the "attorney general's meetings" amount to more than politics, and that the interested parties will deal with substance, not form. The chance for harmony seems, finally, to have arrived.

— JOHN HESTON

News Briefs

ANOTHER TURN-OVER in Lone Pine's KINC news department. Station spokesmen say only that Local Newscaster Bob Harke "is no longer" with the station. Continuing on the air: ABC network's hourly national-international reports.

BLAIR HILLBORN OF SAN BERNARDINO is the new owner of Bishop Theater. Included in the deal: the old Bishop Drive-In Theater which will be torn down at request of landowner DWP, which offered Hillborn "another location."

ALSO ON THE BLOCK is Lone Pine's Sportsman Cafe, long the pride of now-supervisor Richard McDonald. He sold it to Miguel Avitia who gave it up to management by Thelma McRoberts, owner of the Olancho "Ranch House Cafe." Said McRoberts, "It was just too much for us." Meanwhile the owners of Lone Pine's quaint and popular "Merry-go-Round" steakhouse denied rumors that the cafe is for sale. "Maybe later in the year."

A COMMERCIAL FILM CREW arrived to begin filming commercials for an Audi television promo-

tion. A Hollywood production company dealt through a Lone Pine Chamber of Commerce committee to promote movies here after learning that Forest Service and BLM bureaus want an irritating 90-day application. "Audi" will prowl the Alabama Hills to prove its sturdiness for the cameras.

SHERIFF'S DEPUTIES have a murder confession and, presumably, the murder weapon, but no body. A county youth, Danny McRoberts, reportedly confessed to shooting an unknown man and dumping the victim into the Owens River. He later changed his story, and investigators are still trying to put it together.

STILL FOUNDERING on the rocks of administrative indecision: the county's proposal to hire a public information officer, a position recommended by a recent grand jury. Action on that "sometime in the next two weeks." Also hanging fire: the hiring of a county veterans service officer to replace deposed Jim Kelley who resigned under fire months ago. Committees are said to be looking into both, and Kelley has re-applied for the job.

SCHOOL BOARD, Continued

clear definitions of power and authority. Many on the board privately feel, and sometimes express, a growing displeasure with Bernasconi's power base. It has rarely been disputed in any effective way. It is a fact coming to light in counties far beyond Inyo and even now is the subject of a new manual that will be released soon at the state level.

At an earlier county board meeting, the members (four of them recently elected) announced their own plans to draw up a manual of policies outlining areas of authority. As one member explained, the board-superintendent relationship must be built on a system of checks and balances. Board members have fallen short of claiming that previous boards gave rubber-stamp approval of Bernasconi's projects, but they now make it clear they want no such reputation in their own decision-making.

Choquette said "The board wants input into a policy manual. We don't want to be a token board."

Much of the current mutual irritation had its beginnings in the recent wage battles with the county school employees. In that bitter conflict, which brought morale to a new low, a lot of the blame must rest with a state law, SB 160, which failed to define the powers of the board and the superintendent.

Without those definitions, Bernasconi has managed over the past 20 years, to gather about him all the tools of personal power - or so it is claimed by his critics. In some of the decision-making, the board is left out completely, a fact which is becoming disquietingly clear both to board members and a few

voters who with predictable regularity oppose Bernasconi on principle.

But Board President John Treacy, attempting not too convincingly to oil troubled waters, said that as of now at least "I would give Mel the benefit of the doubt because we have no definitions. It's all open to interpretation. We are coming close to getting a manual together, and Mel is helping on this."

Nor was Bernasconi suffering any shortage of diplomatic oil. Asked to confirm or deny rumors of conflict between him and the board he was amiably accommodating to an inquisitive reporter. His comment: "I don't see any problems. It is essentially a new board and it takes time for the board members to become oriented to what they can do to support the superintendent - to encourage the superintendent in school programs. Policy decisions are open to consideration of the board; operational programs are up to the superintendent. They should co-operate in everything that's good for the boys and girls."

Amen, says the board. And in that line in the past year they asserted their authority for the first time in wage negotiations. Members also opposed Bernasconi when he cancelled the county school contract for county health services and instead hired its own school health nurse.

Response, if any, to last week's candidate resolution, and the completion of a manual of policy and power, may tend either to fuel or extinguish the smouldering conflict. For now the relationship remains openly amicable, and privately critical; a wary, watchful waiting on the part of all.

eastern sierra

news service

INYO COUNTY

INDEPENDENCE, CALIFORNIA

JOHN HESTON • BENETT KESSLER

878-2582 * 878-2381

NEWS-LETTER

"May the news in your day be good news every day"

All correspondence to the INYO COUNTY NEWS-LETTER should be addressed to PO Box 531 or 275 Independence, California 93526

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

US POSTAGE PAID
BULK RATE
Independence, Cal.
Permit #6
93526

Buck Gibbons
Drawer D
Independence, CA 93526

RECEIVED
JAN 25 1978

INYO COUNTY DISTRICT
ATTORNEY'S OFFICE